

Commonwealth of Kentucky  
FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION CABINET  
**DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION SYSTEMS**

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**AGENCY CONTACT MEMORANDUM #9805-05**

**TO:** Agency Contacts

**FROM:** Stephen N. Dooley, Commissioner  
Department of Information Systems 

**DATE:** May 14, 1998

**SUBJECT:** Policy, Procedures and Guidelines for Approving External Internet Links

**Scope**

Many state agencies use their Web pages to offer an array of links to Internet resources which are external to Kentucky State Government. When offered in areas of agency expertise, these links can be invaluable to the public. Agencies are encouraged to establish such external links to enrich the wealth of information available through the Commonwealth's Web site. These policies, procedures, and guidelines are offered to assist employees in making appropriate links to other sites from the Commonwealth's site. They are not intended to apply to entities requesting permission to house their information on the Commonwealth's server(s).

**Applicability**

These policies, procedures, and guidelines apply to all Commonwealth of Kentucky agencies linking to Web sites which are external to Kentucky State Government.

**Rationale**

These policies, procedures, and guidelines are necessary because:

- Personnel and technical resource limitations prevent the Commonwealth from linking to all sites which request links.
- Although the Commonwealth is not responsible for the content of other sites linked to it, these links do reflect on it.
- There are certain activities in which it is illegal and/or inappropriate for a government entity to engage. Since the Commonwealth of Kentucky's site is housed on State equipment and maintained by State resources, it could also be deemed inappropriate, or potentially illegal, to facilitate access to sites engaged in such activities by providing links to them.

## **Policy**

- The Commonwealth reserves the right to accept or deny linkage requests at its discretion. The Commonwealth may also terminate linkages at any time.
- As stated on the Commonwealth's home page, "The inclusion of links from this [the Commonwealth's] site does not imply endorsement by the Commonwealth of Kentucky. The Commonwealth makes no endorsement, express or implied, of any links to or from its site, nor is it responsible for the content or activities of any linked sites."
- Agencies providing external links must provide a link to an appropriate disclaimer, such as the one referenced above, on the page providing the external link. To assist agencies in complying with this requirement, the standard Web page template available at [<http://www.state.ky.us/kystandards>] has been updated to include a link to the Commonwealth's disclaimer statement.) Agencies may add additional disclaimer information / links, as necessary.
- The Commonwealth is not responsible for 'policing' sites linked to it. The responsibility for information carried on a site and activities performed on it lies wholly with the site's owner.
- Establishing links to sites obviously carrying illegal material or performing illegal activities is prohibited. Any site found to house this type of material should be deleted immediately.
- Establishing links to sites obviously carrying pornographic material is prohibited. Any site found to house this type of material should be deleted immediately.
- In the case of links to sites which are not obviously housing illegal/inappropriate materials or engaged in illegal/inappropriate activities, but which may possibly be interpreted as doing so, agency heads should carefully consider these requests on a case-by-case basis and seek the advice of agency legal counsel if needed, prior to establishing links to these sites.

## **Guidelines**

- State agencies should insure that the content of sites making a link request has a logical relationship to Kentucky and to the agency's site, prior to granting the request. If a link request appears to be appropriate and related to Kentucky, but is not logically related to the agency's particular site, the agency may refer the request to another, more suitable agency or to the Kentucky Webmaster for linking. This insures that information is linked where it can be easily located by Web site visitors.
- Links to private sector entities should have a clear and beneficial relationship to the agency's site. Such links must be to the benefit of the users/citizens, not to the benefit of the private sector entity.
- A link requestor which publishes information from a third party should ensure that he has obtained all necessary copyright permissions from the third party and complied with all

necessary copyright restrictions. The standard link request form available at [<http://www.state.ky.us/kystandards>] provides a mechanism for entities requesting links to assure the Commonwealth that this has been done. (See "Procedures.") Agencies should verify that this form has been completed before granting a link request.

- To further ensure against possible copyright infringements, agencies should not "frame" other Web sites from their Web sites. "Framing" is the practice of accessing another web site within a window (or frame) on your site.
- The Commonwealth's Web sites are not intended as forums for partisan political activity. Information which appears to promote or denigrate a political party, partisan political positions, political candidates, partisan activities of political office-holders, or other such partisan political activity should not be accepted for linkage. Requests for links of a political nature should be referred to the Board of Elections.
- The Commonwealth's web sites are not intended as a means of promoting an individual firm's commercial activities.
- Sites with content written by many different people (i.e. student sites, etc.) which do not appear to be appropriately moderated or edited by the host should be avoided.
- Sites that are linked from the Commonwealth's web sites should be reviewed periodically to confirm that the links remain active and that the link policy and guidelines are still being followed.
- Approval should not be granted to link to sites that have not yet been created or are not sufficiently developed to determine the nature of their contents. You must be able to view the information being carried on the site before granting a request to link.

## **Procedures**

- As stated, agencies providing external links must provide a link to an appropriate disclaimer, such as the one on the Commonwealth's home page, on the page providing the link. The standard Web page template (available at <http://www.state.ky.us/kystandards>), contains a pre-established link to the disclaimer on the Commonwealth's home page. Agencies may add additional disclaimer information /links, (i.e., to the agency's home page) at their discretion.
- It is recommended that there be a link from each agency's home page which enables a requestor to call up a form to apply for a link, i. e:

"To request a link click here" [suitable icon]. (A prototype form is available from the Commonwealth's Web site at [<http://www.state.ky.us/kystandards>]).

The icon should be a hypertext link to a request form to apply for linkage. On the request form should be a place for:

- A short description of the site's contents, its html address, and the E-mail and postal address of a person to contact.
- A brief summary of the Commonwealth's linkage policy, for example:

"Sites are encouraged to apply for links to enrich the wealth of information available through the Commonwealth's Web Site. However, for a site to be granted a request for a link from any given Commonwealth site, it must have a logical relationship to that site.

Although the Commonwealth is not responsible for the content or activities of other sites linked to it, links to or from the Commonwealth's site do reflect on the Commonwealth. Because of this and because of limited personnel and technical resources, the Commonwealth reserves the right to accept or deny linkage requests at its discretion and to terminate linkages at any time.

The responsibility for information carried on a site and activities performed on it lies wholly with the site's owner."

- A statement that the applicant has ensured that all necessary copyright permissions have been obtained for any third party material published on his site.
- A statement that the applicant certifies that the proposed site contains no illegal/pornographic materials and engages in no illegal activities, with a space for a name and a date.

This form should be capable of being filled in electronically and should be sent to the Agency's Webmaster, or other appropriate designated Commonwealth entity, and retained for future reference.